

## **Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan**

### **Questions, Ideas, Issues and Opportunities Small Group Discussions and Written Comments June 19 & 20, 2002**

#### **Land Protection and Restoration**

- Priority lands in Canada should be depicted on the refuge map.
- Think about a watershed approach including wetland restoration on private lands outside the refuge boundary.
- Dredging of Estral Beach Area takes out Lotus plants.
- Detroit Edison (Fermi & Merrill) power plant property. Encourage habitat enhancements and public access.
- Upgrade wildlife habitat at Sterling State Park.
- Toledo Beach Marina, south of IWR boundary but could use protection.
- Humbug Marsh Complex is a high priority for protection.
- Consider Dr. Bruce Manny's candidate site map (some of these areas are already protected).
- South Hennepin Marsh - Grosse Ile Land Conservancy would like to own property.
- Round Island/Nike Site (Grosse Ile) near airport.
- Sugar Island (Sandy Beach)
- Strots Cut (Point Mouillee SGA)
- Northside Huron River (large marsh restoration project).
- Will Point Mouillee SGA become part of the new refuge? Lack of maintenance is an issue.
- How and when will the Service acquire land? Contiguous tracts should receive a priority for acquisition.
- Land acquisition funding is needed right now.
- Need recommendation for restoration on north Detroit River, Belle Isle, coastal wetlands, Mariner's Park Point.
- Protection of Celeron Island from erosion (without ugly dikes).
- Consider using spoils from Gibraltar canal dredging to build Celeron Island barrier.
- Consider restoring Grassy Island beyond the containment dike.
- Grassy Island needs to be protected soon.
- Restore wetlands along the River Raison and lotus beds at Raison Point.

#### **Landscape Issues (Beyond the Refuge Boundary)**

- Will the Service look outside the present boundary for acquisition?
- Protect all of Monroe County shoreline south of IWR boundary.
  - Residential development can take place but owners can't get flood insurance.
- New Lake Erie Refuge legislation should have the Canadians protect the Ontario islands and coastal wetlands.
- River Raison and Pleasant Creek should be included in the refuge boundary.
- Consider Browstown, the Sibling Prairie (west of Trenton) for protection measures.
- Contact landowners away from the shoreline for watershed restoration.

## **Wildlife Habitat and Populations**

- Include habitat for nongame species, butterflies, etc. Consider planting butterfly bushes.
- Control of phragmites and purple loosestrife is the most important issue in habitat restoration.
- Canadian wildlife protection should equal U.S. effort.
- Control of Mute Swans, predators and feral species.
- Power plants have taken all the good marshes available to waterfowl.
- What will the Service do to increase waterfowl populations?
- Place osprey nesting platforms on Mud and Grassy Island, etc.
- Improve habitat on acquired lands to include planting marsh vegetation, installing bluebird and wood duck boxes, plant butterfly bushes.
- Landowners need to improve their properties for wildlife.
- Historically, Grassy Island was an emergent marsh w/ nesting Black Terns, Grebes, Rails, etc.
- Restore lands for common tern nesting. Mud Island was originally good for this but we are not suggesting a clearcut of the island. Belle Island had tern colonies.
- Work with Fighting Island and Point Mouillee managers to increase waterfowl on the river.
- Bluebill (lesser Scaup) numbers have dropped over the last 20 years.
- Gulls and cormorants are overpopulated and need to be controlled.

## **Aquatic Habitat and Fisheries**

- New refuge should provide benefits to walleye populations. Work through the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission.
- What happens on the uplands effect the waters, especially fish spawning areas.
- Bullfrog populations have declined in recent years.
- Native mussels, clams and aquatic plants indicate the overall health of an ecosystem.
- Does the boundary help the Service to get more involved with local fisheries issues?
- Consider introduction of salmon into the river.
- Does Celeron Island contribute to the walleye population in the river?
- Will the refuge bring in funding for fishery restoration, etc.?
- The cut on the north side of Grassy Island was good pike fishing site.
- Lake Sturgeon. Why is an artificial spawning reef being constructed at Belle Isle?

## **Environmental Contaminants**

- Mention CERCLA and Coastal Zone Management and Clean Water Act (Sec. 404) in CCP.
- Educate public about human health issues related to environmental contaminants. Could include consumption advisories and general ecosystem health information.
- Landfill in Gibraltar has applied for full trash permit and may already be leaking in the River.
- Increase in testing of fish and wildlife for contaminants. Post advisory signs.

## **Partnerships**

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is important for funding for large construction projects.
- Corps looks for favorable cost/benefit ratios in all Seaway projects.
- Can hiking be allowed on Corps dikes? Can be an issue in upcoming interagency meeting.
- Offer technical advice to local governments, park & recreation departments.
- Need to communicate with the numerous organizations and agencies to fit programs together.

- What can business do to improve habitat on their lands (i.e. easements, agreements, partnerships)? Provide list of possible funding sources.
- Get the message out to business. Be prepared with good success stories. Word of mouth may be the best outreach method.
- Riprap/Steel Bulkheads- Need to work with governments and developers to provide habitat during the planning stages. Encourage “soft” shorelines.
- Communities, industries, governments, non-profits and others need to work together to make the area a future model for urban refuges.
- Work with industry/corporations to open their lands for the public and improve habitats.
- Point Mouillee SGA: increase habitat enhancements, wildlife viewing areas, public events, and access for non-hunters to the “Banana” area.
- Sterling State Park. Could Sandy Creek closed area be opened for public use?

### **Hunting**

- Hunting and fishing are important activities on the Detroit River.
- Will the Service provide more law enforcement?
- Will the refuge encourage Canada to adopt the same Detroit River waterfowl hunting regulations as the U.S.? (Discussion of Flyway & NAWMP coordination)
- Will the Service have staff to manage hunts?
- Will trapping be allowed on the refuge?
- Loss of hunting lands due to security closures around power plants since 9/11/01.
- Service management of areas for hunting; permits, limited access, lotteries.
- Can the Service regulate hunting on both sides of the international border?
- Michigan Statute 159: Hunting Closure Act. Service should abide by this state law requiring notification of public prior to closing of hunting areas.
- Concern that Service may stop private landowners from hunting on their lands.
- Don’t change hunting that the State already allows.
- Service law enforcement personnel should have a DNR officer with them on patrol.
- Refuge growth could lead to more available public land and hunting opportunities.
- Will Canada shut down their waters to hunting?
- Will movement of floating blinds in U.S. and Canada waters be restricted?
- Will the Service have new restrictions on times, dates, or closed areas?

### **Environmental Education**

- Refuge should be involved with the Greenway program. Consistent signing and interpretation.
- Cultural history and natural history should be included in program for the visitor center.
- A future visitor center should include a wooden waterfowl decoy museum.
- Possible interpretive themes:
  - Similar to Waterfowl Interpretive Center, Lake Erie MetroParks.
  - Lake Sturgeon recovery.
  - Waterfowling (hunting) history of the region.
  - Human role in wetland restoration and management.
  - Role of artificial barrier islands vs. natural islands.
- Emphasize non-consumptive, low impact recreation (ample fishing areas already exist).
- Need for a nature center in Monroe or nearby.

- How much of new funding will go toward environmental education and visitor centers?
- Need education curriculum related to habitat protection and restoration for the visitor center.  
Can be for both a public and private audience.
- Need outreach to children to increase their environmental awareness.
- Revive the MUCC Art Festival. Possibly reconstruct it as a Downriver Wildlife Art Festival.
- Consider program like Passport for Youth where children visit EE/Nature center, get stamps and celebrate their visit.
- Possible funding from Great Outdoors Program.
- Outdoor water-based activities for youth will increase environmental awareness.
- Future Environmental Center could emphasize endangered species, waterfowl, raptor migrations, marsh monitoring and stress uniqueness of the refuge.  
Include history of establishment of the refuge and the local community.
- Interpret waterway's importance to migratory birds and butterflies.
- Help raise the awareness of what the river provides for wildlife and people.
- A need for environmental awareness programs during the summer months (Flat Rock).
- Determine local school curriculum and look for ways to enhance.
- Family outreach could include birdwatching and tree identification.
- Need to focus on river issues including sediment, pollution and fisheries.
- Help bring teaching out into the environment.

### **Wildlife Observation**

- Wildlife viewing. Possible role for the Service to coordinate all sites and facilities (refuge, state, county, metroparks, etc.) into one interpretive theme and message.
- Create a website pointing to available facilities, programs for children, etc.
- Lack of areas to observe Bald Eagles in Monroe County (Power plant properties are closed).
- Parking lots are not maintained at Point Mouillee and wildlife-viewing visitors may feel unsafe.
- Place signs informing the public of the best wildlife viewing times on existing parks.
- Consider a walkway from Wyandotte south, incorporate the old Beliner Trolley Track in Trenton.
- Consider something like the Holiday Beach Migratory Bird Observatory Tower (Canada)  
Focus on waterfowl and raptor migration counts.
- Ongoing SE Michigan Raptor counts (Metropark and Point Mouillee SGA are partners).
- Build viewing platforms including mounted telescopes.

### **Miscellaneous**

- The Detroit River Lighthouse. Could this be a tour site connected to the refuge?
- Mention St. Lawrence Seaway in CCP.
- General concern that Monroe area will be left out of new facilities and activities because of competition from larger communities upriver.
- Consider using the CCP for Wyandotte for the entire area.
- Jurisdictional boundary issues; does the Service have any control on lands it does not own?
- Concern about littering and dumping on the refuge.
- Keep in contact with all open house attendees through newsletters, future meetings, etc.

- Use the existing Resource/Communication Center at Wayne County Community College.
- Will the CCP help in obtaining funds?
- Do not increase restrictions on recreational use of the river.